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SPECIAL
REPORT

Rhetoric vs. Reality Republicans and Democrats on Quality Education

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Rhetoric Versus Reality

Republicans Versus Democrats on Quality Education

Recent polls and focus groups have suggested to Republicans that smaller class size, safe classrooms, and quality teachers — long championed by Democrats — are top priorities for the American public. In response, Republicans have adopted a strategy that attempts to blur the lines between Democrats and Republicans on efforts to improve the quality of our children's education.

Democrats know there are few grey areas when it comes to the positions of Democrats and Republicans on education. Indeed, the differences are black and white: Democrats have fought for swift passage of measures to improve the quality of education in America, only to leave their efforts repeatedly blocked by Republicans.

Beginning in 1995, Republicans threatened education funding and even attempted to eliminate the Department of Education. More recently, after the American public rejected these attacks on education, Republicans have stated education is one of their top priorities. Despite these claims, Republican actions on recent education bills show their rhetoric to be hollow.

Comparison of Education Proposals by Senate Democrats and Republicans

The following chart summarizes Democratic and Republican action on **S. 2**, the *Educational Opportunities Act* (the bill was on the Senate floor for six days — work on the bill has not been completed), and **S. 2553**, the *Fiscal Year 2001 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill*.

Problem	Democratic Response	Republican Response
Need to invest in high quality teachers.	<p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2 that would require states and local school districts to place a qualified teacher in every classroom.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer several amendments to S. 2 that would improve teacher quality through high-quality professional development, mentoring and recruitment.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2553 to increase the funding for Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants.</p>	<p>Republicans place S. 2 monies for “teacher quality” into a block grant, allowing states to use funding for other uses besides teacher quality. Block grants do nothing to ensure better teachers.</p> <p>S. 2 itself does little to improve teacher quality — it does not increase accountability or guarantee access to high-quality professional development, mentoring and recruitment.</p> <p>Republicans pull S. 2 from the floor after six days, thereby stopping Democrats from offering these amendments.</p>

Problem	Democratic Response	Republican Response
Need to invest in modern schools.	Democrats plan to offer school modernization amendments to S. 2 and S. 2553 to fund \$1.3 billion in federal financial assistance for the urgent renovation of public schools in high-need areas.	<p>Republicans reject federal support for school modernization by failing to provide any guaranteed funding to school renovation in S. 2 and in S. 2553</p> <p>Republicans pull S. 2 from the floor after six days, thereby stopping Democrats from offering the school modernization amendments.</p>
Need to support disadvantaged students.	<p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2553 to increase funding for Title I, Part A grants, and to increase funding to help states turn around failing schools.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer a series of amendments to S. 2 to require States to take action to turn around failing schools in the poorest communities and to increase efforts to improve schools in disadvantaged communities. The “Straight A’s” block grant in S. 2 puts Title I grants for disadvantaged students into a single, general aid block grant with no guarantees that funding will go to targeted students.</p>	<p>The “Portable Grants” in S. 2 allow Title I funds for disadvantaged children to be used as a voucher for any education services, undermining schools’ ability to educate the students by draining away their resources.</p> <p>S. 2553 funds education for disadvantaged students at \$163 million less than requested by the Administration.</p> <p>S. 2553 does not fund the Title I targeted grant program for grants to schools with the highest percentage of poor students.</p> <p>Republicans pull S. 2 from the floor after six days, thereby stopping Democrats from offering these amendments.</p>

Problem	Democratic Response	Republican Response
Need to provide more after-school opportunities for children.	<p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2 that would increase funding and strengthen the 21st Century Learning Centers Program to focus on academic learning.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2553 that would increase funding for the 21st Century Learning Centers Program to \$1 billion. S. 2 authorizes only half of the billion dollars needed for the 21st Century Learning Centers Program and fails to provide a necessary emphasis on extended learning opportunities for students.</p>	<p>S. 2553 cuts the President's request for after-school funding by \$400 million.</p> <p>Republicans plan to offer an amendment to S. 2553 that would cut funding to 21st Century Community Learning Centers by \$78.2 million.</p> <p>Republicans pull S. 2 from the floor after six days, thereby stopping Democrats from offering an after-school amendment.</p>
Need to make schools accountable for results.	<p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2 that would greatly strengthen the accountability provisions in Title I and Title II.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2553 to fund school accountability provisions that focus on turning around failing schools at \$250 million.</p>	<p>S. 2553 zeroes out funding to help states turn around failing schools.</p> <p>S. 2 fails to encourage each state to develop a single, rigorous accountability system for Title I and non-Title I schools.</p> <p>Republicans pull S. 2 from the floor after six days, thereby stopping Democrats from offering this accountability amendment.</p>

Problem	Democratic Response	Republican Response
Need to make classes and schools smaller.	<p>Democrats offered an amendment to S. 2 to authorize the use of \$1.75 billion to reduce class sizes, particularly in the early years.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2 to expand the small schools program to enable schools to take advantage of smaller learning communities.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2553 to continue funding for the Class Size Reduction program at \$1.75 million.</p> <p>Democrats plan to offer an amendment to S. 2553 that would fund the Small, Safe and Successful High School program at \$45 million.</p>	<p>Republicans reject the Democratic amendment to S. 2 for the Class Size Reduction program.</p> <p>Republicans eliminate the Class Size Reduction program in S. 2 and S. 2553 by failing to provide a separate, dedicated funding stream.</p> <p>Republicans pull S. 2 from the floor after six days, thereby stopping Democrats from offering a small schools amendment.</p>

Conclusion

There are real differences between Democrats and Republicans on education. Democrats respond to well-documented problems with education programs that have been tested and work. Republicans do not give schools the incentives, the assistance, and the resources they need to succeed.

Both **S. 2** and **S. 2553**, considered by the Senate this year, undermine the federal role in education. As this legislation demonstrates, Republicans, who have made huge tax cuts more important than investments in education, have not made education a top priority.